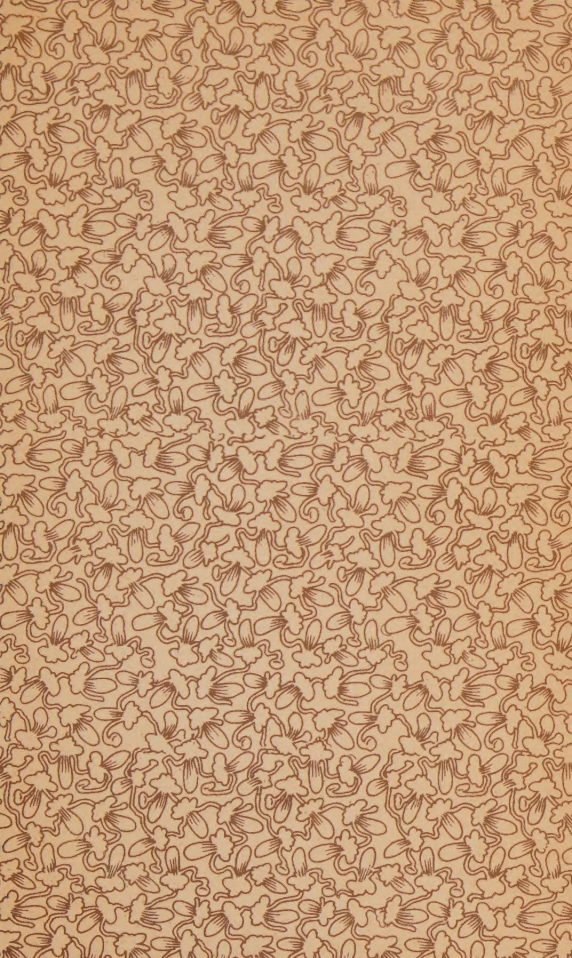
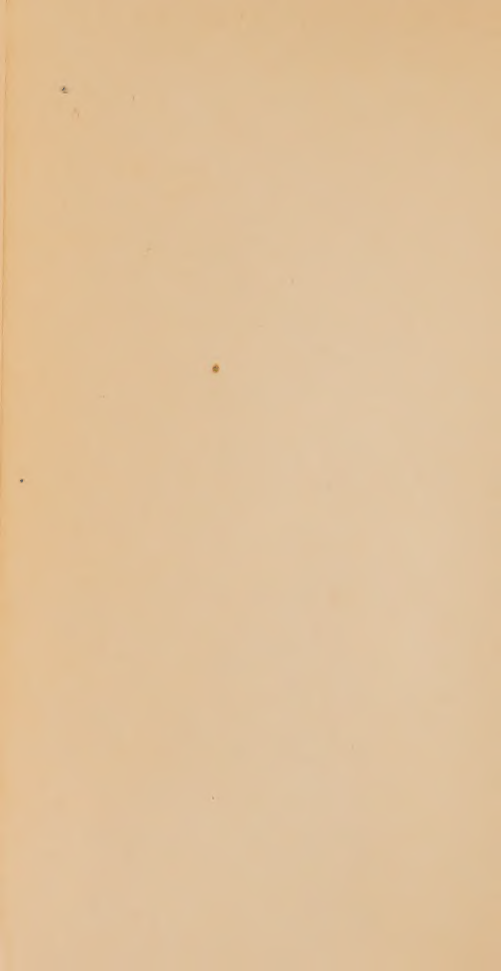








EXPOSITION OF THE
LORD'S PRAYER

The Christian Sanctified by the Lord's Prayer

*Translated from a French
Unpublished Manuscript*

OF

JOHN NICHOLAS GROU

AUTHOR OF "CHARACTERS OF REAL DEVOTION"
AND OTHER ADMIRABLE WORKS

"The son honoureth the Father, and the servant his master; if then I be a Father, where is my honour? and if I be a Master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of Hosts."

Mal. i. 6.

"If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children; how much more will your Father, who is in heaven, give good things to them that ask him."

Matt. vii. 11.

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PREFACE

THE original work, of which this is the translation, is not before the public. It was written by the late Father Grou, S.J., of pious memory, and was found with many other ascetic tracts among his papers, after his decease, in 1803. It contains the same principles of enlightened spirituality, which its devout Author has unfolded in his *Characters of Real Devotion*, and other pious writings, and will be read, it is presumed, with pleasure and profit, even in a translation, by all who can relish the language of solid and genuine piety.

Father Grou was not less eminent for learning than for piety. A few years before the destruction of his Society in France, he was associated with the celebrated Father Brothier, in quality of Librarian of the great Clermont College in Paris: but being ejected from it in 1762, he retired from public life, and divided his time between prayer and study, until lawless anarchy compelled him, with thousands of his countrymen, to seek in exile that tranquillity and security, which they could no longer find in their native soil. He was received with distinguished benevolence by the late Thomas Weld, Esq., of Lulworth

Castle, under whose hospitable roof he continued during the remainder of his life to enjoy an honourable and comfortable asylum. There, "the world forgetting, by the world forgot," he employed his leisure hours in composing this and his other works, which are all remarkable for unction and solidity, and the doctrine of which is acknowledged, by those who were best acquainted with their venerable Author, to bear a strict conformity with his own irreproachable and edifying conduct.

As he lived respected, so he died regretted : and out of regard to his memory he was interred in the family vault of Lulworth with the following Epitaph :



HIC SITUS EST
JOHANNES NICOLAUS GROVIUS,
SACERDOS,
PIETATIS CULTOR ASSIDUUS,
OB CATHOLICAM PROFESSIONEM
ACTUS IN EXILIUM. HUNC IN AMPLEXU
CRUCIS DEFUNCTUM INTER SUOS CON-
DIDIT THOMAS WELD, PIETATIS
CAUSÂ VIXIT ANNOS LXXII,
VETERIS INSTITUTI, QUOD
IN SOCIETATE JESU
CEPERAT, UNICE
AMANS.
DECESSIT IDIBUS DECEMBRIS
MDCCCIII.
R. I. P.



THE CHRISTIAN SANCTIFIED BY THE LORD'S PRAYER

THE Lord's prayer is without comparison the most holy and most excellent of all prayers; since Jesus Christ himself was the framer and the teacher of it. It contains all the dispositions, which are required of a Christian, both towards God, and towards his neighbour; all that he is entitled to ask for the relief of his wants, either spiritual or temporal, and in particular the infallible means of obtaining pardon of his sins.

It is suited to the meanest capacity; yet contains a sublimity, to which the brightest genius could never attain; a depth, which the most intense study and acute reflection would vainly attempt to fathom. It is adapted to every state and condition; to sinners desirous of returning to God, and to penitents; to the innocent, the just, and the perfect. It is calculated to impart warmth to the lukewarm, increase of fervour to the pious, confidence to the timid, disinterested views to the selfish and narrow-minded, and the most exalted sentiments to great souls.

It is the will of Jesus Christ, that all Christians should say this prayer daily, and this his will is clearly expressed in the prayer

itself. Few fail to comply with this will ; but alas ! with how little fruit ! In every liturgy, in every age of the Church, the Lord's prayer has always formed a part of the holy sacrifice of the mass, and is said at the beginning of every division of the divine Office.

Undoubtedly Jesus Christ has included in this divine prayer, short and simple as it may appear, all that can conduce to sanctification : but to effect this, it suffices not to recite it with the lips only even attentively : we must moreover comprehend well its meaning, and be animated with the sentiments which it expresses. Nor is this all : we must have a *practical* knowledge of it, by making our thoughts, words and actions conformable to its dictates. Else instead of sanctifying us, it will serve only to condemn us on the great accounting day, when Jesus Christ will examine how far we have lived conformably to the prayer, which he prescribed to us for the rule of our conduct.

For many years we have recited this prayer every day, and even often every day : yet have we hitherto ever applied ourselves to study it seriously, to understand it thoroughly ? Are we deeply penetrated with the sentiments which it contains ? We cannot be ignorant that all depends upon this ; for we well know that God pays no regard to what issues from the lips, unless at the same time it have its source in the

heart. In a word is our life such, that it can with truth be said to be an exact and constant practice of the Lord's prayer? This is what never enters into the thoughts of far the greater part of mankind. The generality fondly imagine, that they acquit themselves of their duty by rehearsing the *Our Father* like a set form of words, which they have been taught to lisp or mutter from their infancy, without ever reflecting that the study of their whole life ought to be to reduce this prayer to practice.

Although there are already in every language a great variety of expositions of this divine prayer, it is hoped that the addition of one more will not be deemed superfluous, as care will be taken to make it neither too long, nor too short; but to accommodate it to the generality of Christians. To adapt it to the interior state and personal wants of each individual would require as many particular expositions, as there are different classes of Christians: but this must be the work of the Holy Ghost, to whom alone it belongs to proportion his lights and inspirations to the interior dispositions of the faithful. This grace he is ever willing to grant to our humble and fervent petitions: let us solicit it with earnestness, and then read the following short tract with attention and with a resolution of profiting by it.

OUR FATHER

IN the various prayers addressed to God in the gospel by Jesus Christ, he always calls him *Father*: being truly his Son by nature, begotten by him before all ages. In this his coeternal Son, God has adopted us all; and we are all by grace Sons of God and Brethren of Jesus Christ. Before the mystery of this adoption was accomplished and fully revealed, the Patriarchs, Prophets, and Just of the old Law seldom invoked the Supreme Being by any other title than that of *Lord* or *God*; and they uttered with more fear than love the awful names of Jehovah and Adonai. But since the preaching of the gospel, we may and ought to call God Father: Jesus Christ not only permits, but enjoins us to use that name. *You shall pray*, says he,¹ *in this manner: Our Father, etc.* Upon all occasions he uses the expression, *your heavenly Father*; and raising us, as it were, to a level with himself, he says: *My God and your God, my Father and your Father.*²

The name of Father is of all others the most tender and endearing: it at once inspires respect, submission, confidence, and love. These sentiments are imprinted by nature on the human heart, and we should be monsters, if we felt them not for our Parents according to the flesh. How just

¹ Matt. vi 9. ² John xx 17.

is it then, that we should cherish them in regard of our heavenly Father, who is sole Master and sovereign Lord of all creatures—who is infinitely adorable, infinitely good and amiable—and who is our Father by so many titles, which are applicable to him alone!

From him we hold our being, our body and soul, with all the endowments of both the one and the other. He made us out of pure goodwill and benevolence; for he needed us not, being infinitely happy in himself. He continues to preserve us, and every instant we are indebted to him anew for our existence: our life is a continual gift of his beneficence; and were he to withdraw for a moment the hand that supports us, that moment we should fall back into the nothing from which he has drawn us. All this we know, and acknowledge; conscious that we cannot secure our existence for a single instant: and is it possible that we should not love, that we should not fear to displease him, who is the author and preserver of our being; but who could create us only for his glory, by rendering us capable of procuring it!

He has not only given us life, and supports the life, which he has given; but he liberally supplies all our wants: the rest of the universe exists for us alone, and is solely destined for our service. Whatever renders our sojournment on earth agreeable, whatever comforts we here enjoy, all is a gift of his all-bounteous hand. He allows

us the use, the enjoyment of all, that he has made ; but he requires a due subordination to his well-known will, and a return of gratitude, to which he is most justly entitled. How dare we, ungrateful and rebellious children, turn against our Father his own benefits, abandon and forget him for vile creatures, or irritate him by the perverse use, which we make of them ! All this, O my God, thou foresawest, and the foresight stopped not the effusions of thy liberality. What other Father would have acted with such an excess of goodness and tenderness, which alas ! has hitherto produced in me no other effect, than that of rendering my ingratitude more criminal ! And shall I then still continue to offend thee, notwithstanding the keen reproaches, which I feel interiorly ? Ah ! suffer it not, O my Father ; rather take back thy gifts, and deprive me of life itself.

Thou art my Father by nature ; but still more by grace. The transitory life, which I now enjoy, is nothing when compared to the eternal life, to which I am destined by thy paternal love, and which is my true and only end. In that thrice blessed life I shall see thee *face to face, and shall know thee, even as I am known by thee* ;¹ I shall possess thee, my sovereign good, and shall share thy ineffable felicity. Yes : the inheritance reserved for me in quality of thy child is no other than thyself ; and my reward

¹ 1 Cor. xiii 12.

for having loved thee here on earth (which love is already the only solid happiness of my present state), will be to love thee for ever in heaven, and by this love *to be inebriated . . . with the torrent of thy pleasure.*¹ This truth I firmly believe upon thy word though I do not comprehend it : indeed, my future happiness, thanks to thy infinite liberality, is essentially so great, as to exceed my comprehension. Nor is this destined happiness reserved for my soul alone : it will be communicated to this clod of earth my body, which, in a manner proportioned to its capacity, will partake of the glorious qualities with which thy bounty will invest my soul.

This, O my Father, thou hadst decreed from all eternity to do for me, and this in process of time thou wouldst have accomplished, by exempting me from all the miseries of this present life, even from death itself, had not the disobedience of my first parents thwarted thy merciful designs, and put an obstacle to my happiness, which none but thou could have surmounted. And how has thy paternal love effected this ? How has it repaired the woeful evils entailed upon me by original sin ? By a device, which no one could have imagined, much less believed, if thou thyself hadst not revealed it. Thou hast given me thy own, thy only Son, equal to thee in every respect ; who, without ceasing to be what

¹ Ps. xxxv 9.

he is by nature, has deigned, in compliance with thy will and his own, to humble himself to the lowly condition of human nature, and clothe himself in mortal flesh, that he might be capable of suffering and dying. And for whom? For man, for me, to expiate my guilt, and reconcile me to his Father; to restore to me the title of son of God, of which I had rendered myself unworthy; and to re-establish my right to the eternal inheritance of heaven, which I had justly forfeited.

Hence springs that supernatural life, which I hold from thee, O my Father, through Jesus Christ, and those choice graces and helps, which thou art continually showering down upon me with so much liberality and profusion: hence again that fatherly affection and tenderness, which thou testifiest towards me, and that unbounded mercy and compassion which is ever ready to pardon the most heinous and reiterated offences at the first sigh of an humbled and contrite heart: hence in fine those *bowels of mercy*, which prompt thee to seek and recall me when I stray, to stretch out a helping hand to me when found, to carry me back on thy shoulders to thy fold, and to rejoice and exult in having saved me from ruin, as if my preservation were a gain to thee, and thou wert more interested in it, than I am myself.

If God be so tender a Father to sinners, who return to him with sincerity, as so many illustrious penitents attest, and as we our-

selves perhaps have often found him to be in our regard ; what must be his conduct towards pure and innocent souls, who have never lost his favour, and whose only study has been to please him ?

Here, Christian soul, confine not your reflections to general favours, whether natural or supernatural. Recollect to the best of your power all that God has done for you in particular. Perhaps there is not a single instant of your life, which has not been distinguished by some special mark of his benevolence ; by graces of protection and preservation ; of invitation and remorse ; of consolation and encouragement ; of familiarity and intimacy. What has **he** left untried to screen you from evil, to excite you to good, to guide you in the path of virtue, and to make you advance and persevere in it ? He alone knows in detail all that he has done in your favour : many of his graces may have escaped your notice at the time when conferred, or your memory since : and many more never came to your knowledge : but you surely know enough to be penetrated with gratitude, and love, towards your generous Benefactor. Now what would his liberality have been, if you had always been faithful to the graces, which you received ? and surely you owe him not less for the favours, which he wished to bestow, and would have bestowed, if he had not been hindered by your malice, than for those, which he has actually granted. Were

he at this moment to discover to you the long series of graces, which he had prepared for you, with the high degree of glory and happiness, to which they would have raised you, how great would be your surprise, your confusion, and your gratitude!

Enter again into yourself, and say: If God is my Father, as much as it is possible for him to be, both by nature, in having created me, preserved me, and supplied my wants, and by grace, in having adopted me for his son in the person of Jesus Christ, the sole object of his complacency; so as to see and to love me in the sacred humanity of this his co-eternal Son, and to destine me to the same inheritance, glory, and felicity with him; if moreover this Father is infinitely amiable, uniting in his person all possible perfections, and constituting the supreme good of all intelligent creatures; if, in fine, in whatever light I consider him, he has an incontestable right to all the attachment of my soul; why am I so indifferent, so cold, when I pronounce the words *our Father*? Why do they awaken no idea in my mind, no sentiment of affection in my heart? It is undoubtedly, because I never deeply and seriously consider all that is comprised in the tender name of Father; because I never duly reflect on the love, which, in addition to other innumerable and inconceivable proofs, it clearly shows God to have for me; nor on the no less just than sweet duty, which it enjoins, of consecrating all my

affections to him, and of deeming it, as it really is, my only true happiness to love him.

By the little that I have read, I am already convinced of this : how much more thoroughly should I be convinced of it, if I made it the ordinary subject of my meditation, and incessantly solicited new lights from Almighty God ; if I sought those lights in the principles of faith, the mysteries of religion, and the morality of the gospel, which are evidently all reducible to the love of our heavenly Father ; if moreover I sought them in pious books, the end of which is to inspire into the soul, and nourish there the love of God ; and in the example of the Saints, who are only such, in proportion as they have loved God with their whole mind, their whole heart, and their whole strength !

Was he their Father more than he is mine ? Had he done more for them, than he has for me ? Could he in justice exact and expect from them more than he exacts and expects from me ?

This grand and primary subject I should view and comprehend in a still clearer light, if I joined practice to theory ; if in my exercises of piety, particularly holy communion, in the performance of the duties of my state, in the most ordinary actions of life, even such as are common to me with the brute creation, as eating and drinking, I proposed to myself no other end, or intention, than that of enkindling and increasing within

my soul the love, which I owe to my *Father*. Do I then exist for any other purpose than to love him? Is not the time completely lost, which is not spent in loving him? Will not the eternal life, to which I aspire, be a life of love? and where, either in heaven, or on earth, can I find solid content but in the exercise of love?

Alas! how blind, how senseless have I been! Scarce have I known, much less practised the first, the greatest of my duties, filial love, the inseparable attendants of which are an entire and absolute subjection to my Father, a blind obedience to his holy will, an earnest desire of pleasing him in all things, and a sovereign dread of offending him by the smallest wilful and deliberate transgression. Oh! pardon me the past, thou best, thou tenderest of Fathers. I resolve through thy grace to expiate and repair it; and henceforth to have no other thought, or design, or employment, than that of loving, obeying, and pleasing thee. And as I cannot hope to accomplish this by my own efforts, I give up to thee myself with all the powers of my soul and body, that thou mayest consecrate and devote to holy love my whole being, with all that I am, and all that I have. The only favour, which I beg, is, that I may never lose sight of the offering, which I now make thee of myself; and that I may never recite the Lord's Prayer without renewing it interiorly. Such, O my God, is my firm resolution: oh! grant that I

may never swerve from it, or recall it by any wilful sin or deliberate infidelity.

OUR FATHER

IN treating of the name *Father*, we have hitherto considered it in God with reference to Christians taken *individually*, and have urged this as a motive for their loving God. We shall now proceed to consider it with regard to Christians taken *collectively*, and composing one great family, of which God is the common Father, and for this reason bound to love one another.

And indeed it is an observation, which we have been taught to make from our earliest years, that in this prayer, which we know to have Christ for its author, we say not *my*, but *our* Father; and that we address God not in our own name only, but in that of all Christians; petitioning for ourselves nothing, which we do not at the same time petition for them, and which we do not as ardently desire to obtain for them, as for ourselves, from our common Father. Now this implies, that we really desire for them the same blessings as for ourselves; that we love them as our brethren; and that we are united to them by the bonds of pure and sincere charity.

This fraternal charity then is for all Christians a duty, which has its source in the divine paternity, and in our common adoption in Jesus Christ. By baptism every

Christian is son of God and brother of Christ, as well as I am : nor has he less right than I have, to the eternal inheritance of heaven. I must therefore love him, because he belongs to God the Father, and to Jesus Christ, as I do, and is loved by them as I am. Here on earth we live in different places and at different times ; and for the most part are wholly unacquainted with one another : but we all have the same faith and worship, and the same motives for loving God ; we all are destined to the same end ; and if we attain to it, we shall all be united in the same heavenly country, where we shall know and love one another, and be happy in the enjoyment, not only of our own personal felicity, but of that of one another ; where there will no longer be either *mine*, or *thine*, or any private property ; because there *God will be all in all*.¹ This is the expression of St Paul to signify the intimate union, that exists between God and his elect : an expression so sublime, as far to exceed our comprehension. It is the will of God, that this fraternal love and charity, which is to reign among us eternally in heaven, should commence here on earth ; that it should make our exile an anticipated paradise ; and that it should continually increase in us to our latest breath.

Have I ever till now thoroughly understood what the love is, which I owe to my neighbour, especially my Christian brother ;

¹ 1 Cor. xv 28.

upon what foundation it rests ; and how far it ought to extend ? Am I even now aware, that, though I should not hate him, if I have no affection for him ; if I interest not myself in his welfare ; if I be indifferent to the salvation of his soul, and contribute not to it by every means in my power ; I cannot say *Our Father* with truth ; nor recite the Lord's Prayer without pronouncing my own condemnation.

All men are my equals ; for all are made to God's likeness, as well as I am : I ought then to consider myself in their place, and them in mine : I ought, when occasion serves, to treat them, as in like circumstances I should wish them to treat me : I ought never to do to them what I should be unwilling that they should do to me : but on the contrary do to them all the good, which I should wish to be done to myself. Such is the law, which nature has indelibly engraved on the human heart, which justice and humanity combine to enforce, and which cannot be transgressed without a poignant remorse of conscience. This law is very extensive : so much so, that it is seldom perfectly observed, even among Christians ; seldom that it is not infringed, if not exteriorly, at least by the interior disposition of the heart.

But even this is not yet Christian charity, which includes all the obligations of the law of nature, but is not confined to them. Christian charity must be supernatural in

its *principle* ; which principle is no other than habitual grace, infused into us by the Holy Ghost, and enabling us to love God for himself, and our neighbour for God : so that as soon as I lose this habitual grace, I become incapable of exercising charity towards God, or towards my neighbour, until I have recovered it. It must also be supernatural in its *motive*. If I love my neighbour only for his good qualities, for the similarity of his character with mine, for the services, which I have received, or expect to receive from him ; this love is not Christian charity : it is neither pleasing to God, nor advantageous to me. I must love him for the motives, which God proposes to me : that is, because he is, or may become, God's son and my brother in Jesus Christ, and because God and Jesus Christ love him, and order me to love him. This love in fine must be supernatural in its *practice* : that is, it must be excited and accompanied by grace ; so that my will and the divine impulse concur to produce the acts of it.

The foundation of Christian charity is the paternity of God. The Father, because he is Father, loves his divine Son, and in his Son loves us : and he requires that we should mutually love one another with the same love, with which he loves us. If then we love not our Brethren, neither does God love us ; nor do we love him : and God's love for us, and ours for him are from the

love, which we owe to our brethren : since in fact it is one and the same love considered differently, according to the subject, in which it resides, and the object, to which it is directed.

In like manner, God the Son, in consequence of his union with our human nature, loves us all in the individual nature, to which he has united his divinity in order to resemble us : and hence it is, that he orders us to love one another as he loves us, and as he requires that we should love him, not only as God, but as man. Wherefore, if we love not our brethren, we love not Jesus Christ, either according to his humanity or according to his divinity ; either as Son of God, or as our Brother. Thus the love of Jesus Christ for us, and our love for him are also inseparably connected with the love of our neighbour, or rather form with it but one and the same love.

In the Holy Ghost, who is the eternally subsisting love of the Father and the Son, we find a third foundation of fraternal charity. It is by his dwelling in our hearts, that we truly become children of our heavenly Father, and brethren of Jesus Christ. And how is it possible that we should not love one another, if we were all animated with the same spirit, that is, with the same love ! It is by the Holy Spirit that *God is charity*,¹ and that the Father and the Son are one in the love, which they bear to

¹ 1 John iv 16.

each other. It is also by the same Holy Spirit, that all Christians ought to form, and if they possessed it, would in reality form, but one heart and one soul. The love of our neighbour then, no less than the love of God, is the necessary effect of the Holy Ghost's dwelling within us : and we banish this divine Spirit from our soul, whenever we love not our brethren.

How far must this love extend ? So far as to resemble and express in us, as perfectly as possible, the love of the eternal Father for us. At a time, when we were all sinners, and consequently his enemies, he gave us his only Son : a gift, which comprises, and far surpasses all, that a God infinitely rich and liberal could give us besides. This Son he sacrificed to the interests of our salvation ; and deigned to make his death the pledge and the price of our reconciliation ; thus securing our happiness at the expense of what was dearest to him. Behold here a model of the love, which we must have for our neighbour.

Another model of this love is the love, which Jesus Christ has testified for us, and which we ought to emulate in loving our neighbour. *This is my commandment*, he says expressly, *that you love one another, as I have loved you* :¹ The commandment, which *I give you*, he elsewhere tells us, is *a new commandment* :² the example of love, which I propose to you, existed not before me :

¹ John xv 12. ² John xiii 34.

my law is a law of love, carried to excess, if there can be any excess in a love, which a God exacts of you, after having first recommended it by his example. And indeed St John concludes without hesitation, that this commandment obliges us to give our life for our neighbour. *In this*, he says, *we have known the charity of God, because he hath laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the Brethren.*¹ Observe this expression *we ought*. Yes: in certain circumstances, especially when the salvation of our neighbour is at stake, the sacrifice of our life is no longer a counsel; it becomes a duty.

Lastly this love of our brethren ought to be a faithful copy of the mutual love of the Father and the Son. Such Jesus Christ wishes it to be, as he has expressly declared in the prayer, which he addressed to his Father on the eve of his passion, and which may be considered as his last will and testament: *I pray*, he there says, *for them, who shall believe in me through the preaching of my Apostles, that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us.*² And again . . . *May they be one, as we also are one . . . that they may be made perfect in one . . . that the love, wherewith thou hast loved me, may be in them.*³ Every effort to explain these divine words would but serve to weaken

¹ 1 John iii 16.

² John xvii 20-21.

³ Ibid. 22, 23, 26.

them. Let us ponder them in silent meditation, and humbly solicit from heaven the light, which is necessary to comprehend their meaning.

The conclusion, which I must draw from all this, is, that the love of my neighbour, no less than the love of God, is comprised in the words *our Father*; that in them I find the most cogent motives, and the most perfect models of both one and the other; that I cannot carry either too far; that my utmost efforts here below will ever fall short of what the Father and the Son expect and require at my hands; and that the full perfection of this love, which is one in its principle, though two-fold in its object, is reserved for heaven, after I shall have made here uninterrupted exertions to attain to it.

Have I advanced so far? Can I assert with any appearance of truth, that I wish, and strive to love, and actually do love, as I ought, God, who is my Father, and my neighbour, who is my brother; still desiring to love them more and more? Of this I must judge not by words, nor even by sentiments; but by effects, which alone are the true test of the inward disposition of the will. There is no inquiry which more nearly concerns me than this: none, which I ought to make with more mature deliberation and discernment: since the whole Christian Law is contained in these two divine precepts. Henceforth then let me

never presume to recite the Lord's Prayer, without having fathomed the inmost recesses of my heart with a view to these two points, and without having earnestly implored the help of divine grace to form in it the dispositions, which it ought to have : for if I have not in my heart what my lips express, do I not deserve to be rejected by my Father, as a hypocrite ?

WHO ART IN HEAVEN

THE Heaven, which is the abode of God, is not the material and visible heaven, which the stars irradiate. This was created for our use, and long before its existence, as well as after its destruction, God was and will be eternally in the heaven, which alone becomes him, that is, in his own immensity. He has no other abode than himself ; nor does he exist in any particular place, after the manner of corporeal, or even of other spiritual beings. If Scripture represents heaven as the dwelling-place of God, it is only to accommodate itself to the weakness of our comprehension ; it is to give us to understand, that heaven is the abode, where light, and order, and purity reign ; but a light, an order, and a purity, which far surpass all human imagination and conception.

Whatever notion I may have conceived of the true heaven, into which I hope one

day to be admitted, my Father is there, and I am on earth. Heaven then is my true country ; for it is the country, where my Father dwells : and this earth is a far distant exile, where, like a wandering pilgrim, I am to make a temporary sojournment, but have no fixed abode. I know my Father to be here by his words and by what Faith reveals to me concerning him : but I see him not ; as he conceals himself from my view.

Here then I cannot be happy : for then only shall I be truly so, when I see him such as he is.

Heaven, the abode of my Father, is the concurrence of every true, solid, unchangeable, and eternal good. The goods, which this world affords, are as empty and unsubstantial as the present life, to which they are confined, and which itself is a fleeting dream, a vapour dissolved almost as soon as formed. Transient and precarious these pretended goods will one day perish, and at the instant of our death they will cease to exist for us.

This I know to be true beyond the reach of doubt : what a folly then for me, a Christian destined to an eternal inheritance, to fix my grovelling affections upon earthly things, for which I was not made ; which, on the contrary, were made solely to supply my temporal wants during the short term of my banishment ! what a folly passionately to hunt after an establishment, a fortune,

enjoyments, as if I could find them here ; to pursue them with ardour, and in the pursuit to give myself up to agitation and disquietude, to form projects, the very success of which must end in tormenting me ! But how much greater a folly is it, to sacrifice to the acquisition and possession of these false goods my conscience, my innocence, my eternal salvation ! To what a degree of blindness must my passions have reduced me ! Where then is my reason ! Where is my faith ! Though all, that I enjoy, or can enjoy, were to terminate with life ; though I were to die entirely, and had no hopes of heaven ; yet for my present peace and happiness ought I not to be moderate in the desire, the pursuit, and the possession of earthly goods ? Ah ! my God, how can I thus degrade and vilify myself ! Thus forget, disdain, and undervalue my high destination !

My Father has created me only for himself, and for heaven : all, that is not God, is incapable of filling the vast capacity of my heart : I find deeply rooted there an innate desire of immortality : the sole idea of annihilation chills me with horror : my ardent, my incessant wish is to exist for ever, to be happy for ever : Faith points out heaven to me as the place of my eternal beatitude, and as the inheritance, which my Father has promised me, which his only Son has purchased for me with his blood, to which I am entitled in quality of Christian,

and child of God, and of which I shall not be deprived but through my own fault. And yet I turn not all my thoughts and affections towards heaven : I sigh not incessantly after that blessed abode : I hasten not to my country by the path traced out for me by Jesus Christ ! And yet I break not through every obstacle : I surmount not every difficulty, that opposes my progress : I stop, I stray, I lose ground ! And yet I studiously banish from my mind whatever can recall the thought of heaven : I am ever busy about worldly concerns : I bend myself down to the earth like an irrational animal, and attach and rivet all my affections to it : and though by long experience I know, that I neither am, nor can be happy here, I nevertheless seem disposed to forfeit heaven for the paltry pleasure of dwelling in this wretched world for ever ! Is this conduct conceivable ! Yet is it not the conduct of most Christians ? Has it not been, is it not perhaps still, my own ? And if I have not plunged into the most shameful excesses, may I not at least reproach myself with having esteemed and loved the things of this world too much ? Have I not gloried in my riches, or blushed and repined at my poverty ? Have I not preferred myself to those, who are less favoured with birth, wealth, honours, power and distinction, than I am ; or envied those, who excel me in these frivolous advantages ; or in fine studied more to preserve and increase them,

than to amass a treasure of merits and glory
in heaven?

And yet every day I presume to say:
Our Father, who art in heaven: but in say-
ing so, I raise neither my thoughts, nor
desires to heaven: I aspire not to the
happiness of seeing, of possessing my
Father: I pine not away, as the Saints did,
with eager expectation of the happy moment
that is to unite me to him. On the con-
trary, I fear this moment, and banish it
from my thoughts as much as possible:
because in fact I love not my Father; I
feel myself miserably destitute of the
sanctity, which is necessary for the enjoy-
ment of his presence. And yet I make no
effort to acquire this sanctity! I have ample
cause indeed for humility, confusion, and
regret: but, O my God, grant that I may
not content myself with this: grant, that
from this very moment I may change both
my sentiments and my conduct. Such is my
earnest desire, and this desire thou thyself
hast inspired: Oh! deign then to prosecute
and accomplish in me the work of thy
grace; and, should it be necessary, fill the
short space, which I have still to live upon
earth, with so much bitterness and disgust,
that notwithstanding the repugnance of
nature, I may be compelled, as it were, to
sigh and pant incessantly after the happy
regions of everlasting bliss.

HALLOWED BE THY NAME

FROM the order, in which Jesus Christ has arranged the petitions, which compose his prayer, it is evident that the first duty of a Christian is to desire and petition, preferably to every thing else, the sanctification of the sacred name of God, his Father. This name, infinitely holy in itself, is *hallowed* or sanctified by Christians, whenever they acknowledge and adore its sanctity ; when they glorify it by the homage of their mind and hearts, and the tribute of their praises ; when not only they shun with extreme care whatever can profane or dishonour it ; but when their thoughts, and words, and actions are all directed to its glory ; so that the promoting of the glory of this sacred name is, as it ought to be, the primary intention and aim of their whole conduct.

In fact for what end do I exist ? Undoubtedly to procure the glory of God. Why has he created me and all other things ? No less certainly for his glory. He lavishes upon us with profusion all the treasures of his mercy ; so as to be willing to share one day with us his own felicity ; but he neither will, nor can communicate to us his glory : this he necessarily claims for himself alone. He approves, he recompenses nothing in us, which is not done for his glory, which is not at least indirectly referred to it. Whatever contributes not

in some degree to his glory is lost for us, and has no merit in his pure sight. Whatever is repugnant to his glory, in the same proportion displeases, offends, and irritates him, and, unless cancelled by sincere repentance, must necessarily entail upon us the severity of his judgements.

Am I thoroughly convinced of this great truth? It is at once the groundwork of religion and morality, and the source and principle of my welfare : for my first interest is the interest of God ; and by seeking to glorify him, I shall infallibly secure to myself every blessing. The motive of his glory so much excels every other consideration, as eminently to comprehend all that can be advantageous to me, both in this life and in the next. By interesting myself in what regards God, I compel him, as it were, to interest himself in a special manner in what regards me. How unreasonable then is my conduct, when, in serving God, I think of myself only, and refer all to my own interest. Thereby I do not perhaps absolutely risk my salvation : certainly however I obstruct my perfection ; I taste but imperfectly the sweetness attached here below to sanctity ; in fine I considerably diminish the reward, which is promised me in the realms of bliss.

All this deservedly challenges the most serious consideration of the many souls, whose conduct is swayed solely by self-interest, and who, in their exercises of piety

and other good works, have nothing in view, but their own private emolument. Am not I myself of the number? Have I hitherto, in all things, and above all things, sought the glory of my heavenly Father? Is this the object, which most frequently and most forcibly strikes my mind? In the sins, which I have committed, what is it, that excites within me the most lively regret, the most poignant affliction? Is it to have dishonoured the sanctity of God, to have robbed him of his glory? In addressing my prayers to him, is my first care to congratulate with him for his adorable perfections, to acknowledge his benefits, to annihilate myself before him, and to devote my whole being to the promoting of his glory? In his divine presence, are not my thoughts, even when best employed, almost wholly bent on myself and my own wants? Am I not afraid, lest he should forget me, were I to forget myself, in order to think of him? Do I frequently conjure him to interest himself in the sanctification of his own name, to make it known to so many infidels, who are ignorant of it, to cause due respect and homage to be paid to it throughout the whole universe? Is this the first, the uppermost desire of my heart? Do I *pine away* and wither, like holy David, at the sight of the public scandals, which deluge the earth with libertinism and impiety? Is it the subject of my greatest joy to see and hear events, that contribute to the glory of God, and the

propagation of the faith, to the reformation of manners, the renewal of piety, and the edification of the public? In fine, if it be true that the glory of the Father is that of his children, must I not acknowledge that I am far from having the sentiments, which characterize a child of God; that I love him but little and take little interest in what concerns him?

O my Father, change, I beseech thee, my interior dispositions with regard to this grand object. Inspire into me from this moment to my last breath the firm and inviolable resolution of sanctifying thy name, in all things without exception, by my thoughts and intentions, by my desires and affections, by my words and actions: assist me to sanctify it every day in a more excellent and more worthy manner; to cause it to be sanctified by all those, over whom I have any authority; to oppose and stem by every means in my power, and at least by my prayers, sighs, and tears poured forth in thy sight, the deluge of irreligion and licentiousness, which threatens to overwhelm the whole face of the earth. Never had thy children more reason than now to cry out with earnestness: *Hallowed be thy name*: and to such a height has the evil swelled, that thy omnipotence alone can restrain it. I unite now, and will continue to the end of my life to unite with those holy souls, who, in reparation of the innumerable outrages done to thy holy name,

never cease to offer to thee their prayers and communions, their fasts and austerities, their sufferings and their very lives.

The hallowing of God's name is for every Christian a duty of the most unlimited extent. It claims every moment, every circumstance of our life, and the exertion of all our faculties, of all our talents : it requires the strictest watchfulness over ourselves, an extreme purity of intention, and a constant and faithful docility to the dictates of grace. If, Christian soul, you sincerely wish to fulfil this great duty, you have no surer means of doing it, than that of giving yourself up entirely to God, and thereby enabling him to sanctify his name in you and by you, according to the designs, which he has formed, and which he will manifest only in proportion as you allow him to dispose of you. This consecration is already in itself the most perfect means of sanctifying this adorable name ; and by making God the absolute master of your liberty, you moreover allow, engage, and in some sort compel him to employ you wholly for his glory. He alone knows in what, how, and to what extent he wishes to be glorified by you ; he alone has in his power the means of effecting it ; he demands of you nothing but your co-operation ; and this will be full and entire, if you become in his hands an instrument supple and pliable at will. Whatever views, whatever activity of your own you join to his opera-

tions ; every effort on your part, which prevents his grace, instead of seconding it, will serve only to retard the work. Whereas by an entire dependence you free yourself from all fear and disquietude, all deceit and illusion ; you steer clear of the double rock of pusillanimity and presumption ; and you have the fullest moral certainty of sanctifying the name of God, as perfectly as is possible ; since it is properly he then, that sanctifies it, and you only second his operations.

THY KINGDOM COME

THE *Kingdom* or dominion which we here pray that God may enjoy, is not that supreme, independent, and absolute sovereignty, which in quality of sole Creator and Lord of the Universe, he necessarily exercises over all nature. This *kingdom* no one can wrest from him, no one can diminish, or share with him : nor can any one disturb, or suspend for an instant the exercise of it. To this we are all subject without exception ; nor can we withdraw ourselves from it, whatever our inclinations may be, whatever exertions we may make to emancipate ourselves from it.

In this second petition of the Lord's Prayer is meant a moral *kingdom* or sovereignty, by which God reigns over our wills, but not without our consent ; to which we are free to submit or not submit, though

we have no right to resist it, and which never extends further than we are willing to allow. This *kingdom* or dominion is highly glorious to God, because it has nothing forced on our part, being the effect of our own free choice. God invites and presses us to accept him for king ; he signifies to us his commands, and enforces them by proffered rewards and threatened punishments ; but he uses no compulsion. Indeed compulsion and constraint must ever prove ineffectual in gaining the heart, over which no violence can prevail, and which in this place of trial will always be at liberty to say : I will, or I will not allow God to reign over me.

Undoubtedly it is sovereignly just that such a Father as God is, should reign over his children. The love, which they owe him, imposes on them the law of an unbounded submission and obedience ; and this law can have nothing difficult or irksome to the true children of God. On the contrary they will place their glory and their happiness in the observance of it, and freely and willingly make all the sacrifices, which it exacts. Besides the *kingdom* of God over us is attended with every circumstance that can incline us to submit to it, as it is essentially connected with our dearest interests and exercised by God with so much sweetness, forbearance, and condescension in favour of our liberty, as to render it infinitely amiable.

Every day I say to God: *thy kingdom come*: but unless these be empty words, which the mouth pronounces, while the heart takes no part in them, it is clear that by them I pledge myself, first to extend his *kingdom* over my own mind and heart; then to desire that it should be extended over the mind and heart of others, and to contribute to this as much as I am able, according to my state and condition. Now: how far do I fulfil these duties?

Does God reign over my *mind*? Does he govern its thoughts? Does he regulate its judgements? Instead of consulting and following upon all occasions the Spirit of God, do I not consult and follow my own fancies? Do I despise, as I ought, the opinions and maxims of the world, which I know to be in direct opposition to those of God? In attentively examining these points, shall I not discover much to reform in my notions? *Whosoever*, says St Paul,¹ *are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God*. And of course, those, who are led by another spirit, are not his children. This sentence of the Apostle, which admits neither exception, nor restriction, ought to strike me with terror.

Shall I, to quiet my fears, strive to persuade myself that I am led by the Spirit of God in whatever is essential; and that if I follow my own spirit and that of the world, it is only in what is of less consequence?

¹ Rom. viii 14.

But first, it is clear that, in these less important points, I do not behave like a child of God, and consequently that, so far at least, I am unworthy of that title. Again, it is no less clear, that in following either the spirit of the world, or my own spirit, in points which may seem to me not essential, I expose myself to follow them, and to swerve from the Spirit of God, even in such as are essential.

But to descend to particulars, what are the points, in which I think myself at liberty to judge according to the maxims of the world and my own ideas, and not according to those of God? The world and its followers reprobate all those maxims of the gospel, though dictated by the Spirit of God, which prescribe detachment from the riches, the pleasures, the honours of the earth; which enforce the necessity of self-abnegation and of carrying one's cross; which enjoin the love of God and of our neighbour carried to a perfection, that banishes self-love as far as is possible; which extol meekness, patience, humility, and purity of intention; which in fine condemn *the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life*. Now: can I assert with truth, that in all these points, and in many others of the like nature, I judge according to the Spirit of God, without any regard to my own private judgement, or to that of the world? Can I flatter myself that it is a matter of little

consequence for a Christian to form, with regard to any of these points, a judgement different from that of God? In fine can I clearly determine what is, and what is not, essential in each of these points, and mark out the precise limits, where, without risk of salvation, we may cease to pass the same judgement of it, as God does, and begin to judge according to our own ideas and those of the world?

With respect even to persons who pretend to devotion, God is very far from reigning over the mind of the greatest part of them, and from regulating their ideas and their plans of conduct in matters of piety. If such persons were directed solely by the spirit of God, they would pay more attention to the reformation of their interior, than to the composure of their exterior; to the prayer of the heart, than to that of the lips. They would take more care to fulfil the duties of their respective stations, than to load themselves with a multiplicity of superfluous and irksome practices; to be pliant and docile, than obstinate and headstrong; to submit to the judgement of their directors, than to judge for themselves, and perhaps pass judgement on those who govern them. They would labour more to conceal, than to publish their good actions; to bend their inclinations to grace, than to accommodate grace to their inclinations; in fine (for the detail were endless), to examine, condemn, and correct themselves, than

to watch, censure, and reform others. They would form a more just, noble, and exalted idea of Christian perfection, and would not descend to trifling, insignificant observances, which create trouble and scrupulosity; nor affect principles, either excessively rigid, or unwarrantably lax, and indulgent to corrupt nature. Were the kingdom of God established over our mind, it would not suffer us to change incessantly our plan of conduct; but would maintain us in a perfect uniformity and evenness of temper, and a serene peace and joy, which nothing could trouble or impair.

Does God reign over my *heart*? Is he the Master of its motions, of its affections? Is it God, who excites, who controls, who regulates them? Directed by him, do I seriously strive to purify my heart, as much as possible, from the leaven of self-love, that enemy of divine love, and even of the lawful and well-ordered love, which I owe to myself? It is principally by my attention to discover self-love, which is so artful in disguising itself, by my courage to attack it, and by my determination to spare it in nothing, that I can judge whether the kingdom of God be established in my heart.

I may perhaps have no criminal affections: but have I none, which are dangerous? None, which are vain and unprofitable? None, which, though lawful, are excessive? Have I none, which are merely natural, which it is my duty to sanctify, and which

God would infallibly sanctify, if he reigned over my heart?

The main study of a Christian ought to be that of his heart: but is he capable of this study, unless he be directed by divine light: and will God impart this light at all times, and in all circumstances, even the most delicate and embarrassing, but to those, over whom he reigns with the most absolute sway? The primary task incumbent on a Christian is the reformation of his heart; but will he have either the will to undertake, or the strength to execute this task, unless God gives him both, whensoever he needs them? And to whom will God give them in the degree necessary for the accomplishment of this great work but to those, who have given themselves to him, that he may reign over their hearts, and model them according to his own? The success of this work depends upon us, no doubt: but it depends much more upon God; and God undertakes it with special care and affection in favour of such only, as oppose to him no wilful, no deliberate resistance, though they may sometimes experience the repugnance of nature. Oh! what a difference in purity of heart between him, who has God for the absolute Master of his liberty, and him, who still presumes to dispose of himself in certain points, and to a certain extent, which he cannot fix, and to which, though fixed, he will find it very difficult, not to say impossible, to confine himself!

When once God reigns over the mind and over the heart, he will soon reign over the whole man. All will obey him : nothing will resist him : he will triumph with ease over every opposition of corrupt nature, over the most inveterate passions and habits. What order, harmony, and sanctity in the interior and exterior conduct of a Christian, over whom God reigns thus ! In him all is supernatural ; and yet so easy, uniform, and unaffected, that he seems to act by his own direction, though grace be the secret spring, which gives motion and vigour to all that he does.

This is what I ask of God for his glory and my own sanctification, when I say : *thy kingdom come*. Am I aware of the full meaning of these words ? Is the petition sincere on my part ? Do I really wish it to be granted ? Certainly not, unless I give myself to God without reserve. His empire over me must be the effect of my free and entire consent : whereas I submit to it as if by compulsion, as if it were a galling yoke, which I seek to shake off as much as I am able. It must have no bounds : whereas I restrain and limit it in a thousand different ways, in which I strive to retain some right over myself.

But again, I make not this petition for myself alone : I am bound to extend it to all Christians, to all men. I must wish and pray, that the kingdom of God be spread everywhere ; that every creature endowed

with reason be subject to it ; that the true religion with its tenets and morality be known, embraced, and practised in all ages to come, in all countries, and with all the perfection, which it deserves, and of which mankind is capable ; in a word, that the whole universe form but one assembly of Saints, dependent in all things upon grace. And I must, according to my state, condition, and talents, promote to the very utmost of my power the establishment of this kingdom of God. To this must be directed the authority of the Sovereign over his subjects, of the Magistrate over his dependants, of the Master over his servants, of the Tutor over the pupils intrusted to his charge. To establish the kingdom of God in souls is, in a special manner, the object of the ministry of Priests, who are bound wholly to devote themselves to it. It behoves me to examine what my obligations in this point may be ; how I fulfil them ; why I do not fulfil them ; or why I do not fulfil them better ; and to reflect with trembling on the rigorous account, which I shall one day give of my conduct in this point.

My heavenly Father promises to make me reign with him eternally in heaven, provided that I make him reign here on earth over myself, and, as far as depends on me, over others. Jesus Christ who, upon these same terms, is seated on the throne of his Father, has expressly pledged himself to share it with me. *To him, that shall*

overcome, he says, *I will give to sit with me in my throne : as I also have overcome, and am set down with my Father in his throne.*¹ This everlasting *throne* and *kingdom* of God, and of the Elect with God, is the grand object of this petition of the Lord's prayer : this is the *kingdom*, to which, influenced solely by the motive of God's glory and my own happiness, I must aspire with all my strength, carefully fulfilling the condition, which is to secure to me the enjoyment of it, and contemning the honours, riches, and pleasures of the earth which, compared with it, are infinitely unworthy of my attention.

THY WILL BE DONE ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN

HE, who here teaches us to petition for ourselves and for our brethren the accomplishment of God's will, is himself the Son of God, who descended from heaven to do the will of his Father ; whose food and nourishment it was to accomplish this divine will ; who from the first instant of his mortal life devoted himself to it ; and who always and in all things did what was most conducive to it. If Jesus Christ, God as he was, still, in consequence of his humanity, was bound to submit to the will of his eternal Father, and if in fact he carried this submission and obedience unto

¹ Apoc. iii 21.

death, even the death of the cross ; how much more ought we to subject our will to the will of God ; we, who are mere creatures ; we, to whom he, that is *God of God*, has given such an example of submission and given it only because he had rendered himself like to us and represented us !

And how must we fulfil the divine will ? As the blessed Angels and Saints fulfil it in heaven : with the same fidelity, the same promptitude, the same love, the same disinterested views. The will of God is the sovereign motive, which actuates the inhabitants of heaven. The very instant it is signified to them, they conform to it with the most perfect exactness ; they omit no part of it ; they neither plead exemption, nor allege excuse ; they stop not to reason on the order which they have received ; but they execute it ; they deliberate not ; but they act ; they defer not ; but quit all, and are in an instant wherever God sends them. Not only they have no repugnance to obey, but they show an inexpressible eagerness and zeal and joy : they obey because they love, and in proportion as they love, and they place their happiness in obeying. Their disinterestedness is so pure and unalloyed, that they lose not a thought upon themselves. Such is the model, which Jesus Christ proposes to us in his prayer, and which he himself infinitely surpassed.

If it be just that God's will should be the

sole law in heaven, is it not just that it should be the sole law upon earth? Are we less his creatures, than the heavenly Spirits and blessed Souls? Does not his *kingdom* extend over us as well as over them? Have we rights and exemptions, which they have not? And if conformity to the divine will and pleasure be the prime source of their felicity, why should it not be that of ours here below? The only difference between them and us is, that we are still on the road to bliss, and consequently still at liberty to obey or not obey; whereas they are arrived at the term, where their state being fixed and invariable, they are determined by the sight and possession of God never more to swerve from his will. Now this difference for many reasons makes to our advantage. In the realms of bliss, obedience is a reward; here it is a subject of merit. Properly speaking our obedience is glorious to God, only because it is free on our part: whereas theirs, though perfectly voluntary, is a necessary consequence of their state. True it is, that our obedience is painful and irksome; that it requires struggles and exacts sacrifices: but these are the very circumstances, which render it agreeable to God and precious in his divine sight. We may perhaps wish that it cost us no more than it costs the Blessed: but is this wish reasonable? Is the accomplishment of it compatible with our present condition?

However we have a means of rendering our obedience sweet and agreeable, which nothing can hinder us from adopting, or rather, which every thing invites us to adopt. It is to give ourselves wholly to God, that he himself may make us accomplish his will, by bending down our will to his by the sweetness and efficacy of his grace. What hinders this is, that we are so tenacious of our liberty, as to remain our own masters in numberless occasions: whence it happens, that we frequently desire not what God desires. Let us once for all renounce a right, which is so fatal to us, and which is a real usurpation, and acknowledge, that we hold our free-will from God for no other end, than to devote it to him, and use it according to his pleasure. We shall no sooner have consecrated it to him, than love will teach us, as it taught the Saints, to place our glory and happiness here below in submission and conformity to the will of God. We shall thus arrive at as perfect a resemblance of the Saints in heaven, as we can aspire to on earth. We shall no longer repine at the irksomeness of obedience, but be glad to offer some violence to our inclinations for God's sake. In the divers occurrences of life, that thwart, humble, and mortify us, we shall have in view the will of God, and thence derive consolation and support. The repugnance arising from corrupt nature will afford us an occasion of fighting and of

conquering. In fine, whatever sacrifice shall be necessary for the accomplishment of the divine will, we shall make it with pleasure from the conviction, that love lives by sacrifices. On one side, our courage and generosity will gradually increase; on the other, all difficulties and obstacles will be removed; and what, at first seemed to us impracticable, will in process of time become easy, and even pleasant. At length the will of God will so far become the food of our soul, that we shall no longer be able to subsist without it; as, in proportion, is the case with the heavenly Spirits, allowing for the difference between their state and ours.

Many Saints have arrived at this degree of perfection. We daily say to God, as they did: *thy will be done*: but what we say with the lips only, without attention and concern, they said from the heart, with reflection, and by the attractive influence of grace. What we content ourselves with saying only, without making our words the rule of our conduct, they studied to carry into continual practice. And yet we have the same reasons to actuate us, as they had; we have the same occasions. Not a day passes, in which we do not meet with some opportunity of conforming our will to the divine will, and this conformity, by thwarting our inclinations, and exercising our patience, would either punish, and thereby cancel our faults, or purify and refine our virtue. But we make not the same use

of these contradictions, as the Saints did. We interiorly rebel and murmur ; we give ourselves up to impatience and vexation, to discouragement and melancholy, sometimes even to blasphemy and despair. And what do we gain by it but an increase of misery ; while the will of God is no less infallibly accomplished, notwithstanding all our repugnance ; but without any consolation to us, without any merit on our part.

When we see opened to us so sure, so simple, so short a way to sanctity ; a way so conformable, not only to the principles of faith, but to the light of reason ; and at the same time so easy, so sweet and so comfortable ; is it possible that we should refuse to walk in it ? In fact what is required of us ? To will every instant what God wills, and not to will what he wills not. To this single point is attached our perfection, and even our present happiness. Of this we cannot doubt. Let us then once for all exert our utmost efforts to put, and with the grace of God to maintain, our will in this holy disposition. We shall find therein a peace which we should seek elsewhere in vain ; a peace, which is solid, durable and sometimes delicious, even in the midst of the greatest afflictions and of crosses the most distressing to frail nature.

What does God solely desire, after his own glory ? Undoubtedly our welfare. In the arrangements of his providence his

view is to conciliate these two things, and to make them mutually support each other. He has taken infallible means to effect this : we have only to let him act, and to acquiesce in all that befalls us, either immediately from him, or by the intervention of creatures. In willing therefore what God wills, we will our own welfare ; and in willing the means which he employs, we will what cannot fail to conduct us to it. In fact, if we reflect upon what God ordains in our regard, we shall see that all events, even the most trivial, tend to make us either practise some virtue, or correct some vice : but above all to humble our pride and mortify self-love. Now we know by experience, that these are the two fruitful sources of all the sins, which shut heaven against us, and of all the punishments, which deprive us of solid happiness on earth. Thus, by conformity to God's will, we dry up by degrees these sources of misery, and insure to ourselves, as far as is feasible, our present, and our future felicity.

Let us then pray, but with all the affection of our soul, and with a sincere desire of being heard, that for God's glory, our own welfare, and that of our brethren, the divine will may be perfectly accomplished by us and by them, in us and in them : let us beg, that it may never meet with any obstacle on our part : and let us, as we daily may, accustom ourselves to be humble, to bend beneath the powerful hand of God,

and to accept with submission all that happens by his appointment; being convinced, that he has nothing in view but our good. In every occurrence, that thwarts our designs, let us have often in our mouth, always in our heart, this great saying of Jesus Christ : *thy will be done : not mine.*

Here it may be proper to remark, that these three first petitions are the most excellent acts of love, which can be produced ; and consequently that fidelity in reducing them to practice is a continual exercise of love, even of the most pure love ; since God is directly the object of them ; which however does not exclude our welfare, but secures it. We address these petitions to God, because he alone can put us in the dispositions of love, which they suppose ; because we cannot co-operate in rendering them efficacious without his grace ; and because all good things come from him, consequently prayer, which obtains for us all other good things.

GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD

It is only after having asked of God what concerns *his* interests, that we are directed to turn our thoughts to ourselves and to solicit the relief of *our* wants. It is according to the order of nature, that children should apply to their Father for their daily food. In this respect God is incomparably more

our Father than our ordinary Fathers are. He it is, who, in quality of first and universal cause, provides for the wants and necessities of our bodies, which are all meant to be comprised under the name of *bread*. With regard to corporal necessities all men, whether rich or poor, old or young, great or small, are in respect of God like helpless children, utterly incapable of relieving themselves, unless God furnishes them with the means. We contribute indeed to this by our care, labour, and industry : but our labour and industry produce nothing of themselves : they only second the operations of Providence, who is the true nurse of mankind, who in this point merits all our acknowledgement, and to whom we testify our dependence in whatever concerns our food by praying for it daily.

In consequence of the fall of the first man, he and all his posterity have been doomed to labour for their sustenance. Whence it follows, that whoever is in a condition of working, and does not work, has no right to his sustenance ; that he is not entitled to petition it of God ; and that he ought not to complain, if it be withheld : but on the other hand, if, according to the divine appointment, he neglect nothing to procure it by his labour and by the exertion of his talents, or if he be rendered incapable of working by age, infirmity, or other lawful reasons, he must hope with most firm confidence, that God,

who feeds the birds of the air, will not abandon him.

But observe, it is *bread* and necessary food, that we ask of God ; what nourishes the body, not what flatters and pampers sensuality ; what screens us from the inclemency of the weather, not what maintains effeminacy, luxury, and vanity. Our wants once supplied, we ought to be content, seek no further, and avoid all excess, which is no less hurtful to the body, than to the soul. Let us use the gifts of God according to his intention, and not employ them in offending him. Let us confine ourselves to the use alone, without seeking for gratifications, unworthy of an immortal soul, and forbidden by God. Let us ever remember, that this present life is itself only a means of meriting eternal life, and not our end : much less then ought that to be our end, which is destined only to support this life. Were God to punish the misuse of temporal goods by the subtraction of them, we should be careful never to misuse them : and ought we to be less sober, less temperate, because the chastisement of this abuse is reserved to the next life ? Let us then with thankful hearts eat in God's presence the bread, which he gives us : let us eat it with a view of employing in his service the corporal strength, which it supports.

Let us not be anxious about *to-morrow* : it is the bread of *to-day*, that we petition. Satisfied with obtaining it, let us extend

our views no further : to-morrow we may renew our petition for new wants. What avails it to amass and hoard up, as if we distrusted Providence? Was ever any one in want of bread, who, after having used the means of getting it prescribed by Providence, rested on that Providence with confidence of obtaining it? Why so much forecast, solicitude, and precaution, so injurious to the goodness of our Father? Why do we not imitate children, who, anxious only to obey and please their parents, live without any concern for their sustenance? Avarice then (disguised under the name of economy), distrust, disquietude, and all the troubles of mind occasioned by corporal wants are condemned by this petition of the Lord's prayer, which, if once thoroughly understood and put in practice, would in an admirable manner rectify our sentiments and our conduct with regard to earthly goods, detach our affections from them, moderate our eagerness to acquire and retain them, and raise us to a noble independence in the use, which our wants compel us to make of them.

We say not : *Give me my bread* ; but, *Give us our bread* ; asking it of our common Father for all his children, through a principle of universal charity. If then some of our brethren be in want of it, while God gives it to us in abundance, it is clearly his will, that we should relieve their indigence with a share of our superfluity : for it

is clearly his intention to grant nourishment to all, since he makes us petition it for all; but this his intention would be frustrated, if the rich were not established the ordinary ministers of his providence in regard of the poor, and if they were not bound to enter into his arrangements, which are so ordered as to afford, as well to the poor as to the rich, an opportunity of exercising many virtues. And this is the more incumbent on the latter, as God has not pledged himself to supply by miracles the wants of the former. Hence we go directly against the views and designs of God, and against the petition, which he puts into our mouths, when we fail to relieve with our superfluity the indigence of our brethren; and we deserve ourselves to be deprived of those very necessities, which we are so hard-hearted as to refuse to them: if God does not deprive us of them, it is because he reserves us for greater punishments. Besides we are indebted no less to the prayers of the poor man, than to our own, for the bread, which God gives us; since he petitions it, as well for us, as for himself: he has then a just right and title to his share of our superabundance.

In St Matthew, instead of the words, *our daily bread*, we find *our supersubstantial bread*; and by this expression, according to the explication of the holy Fathers, is undoubtedly meant the Eucharistic Bread, which is the supernatural food of our souls,

which ought to be our daily nourishment no less than ordinary bread, and which our heavenly Father is disposed to bestow upon us every day, if every day we put ourselves in a condition to receive it. Such, no doubt, is his intention: such that of Jesus Christ, who, in presenting to us his adorable flesh under the appearance of bread, gives us to understand, that as common bread is our daily food; so his body is destined to be the daily nourishment of our souls. Such also is the intention and wish of our holy Mother the Church, who, in her last General Council,¹ declares it to be her wish that her children should communicate every time they assist at the holy sacrifice of the Mass, according to the practice of the primitive ages; and St Ambrose clearly says, that we ought all to live in such a manner, as to deserve to partake of the heavenly banquet daily. At least, without confining ourselves to the rigorous precept of annual communion enjoined by the Church, under pain of not being acknowledged for her children, we ought never to let pass any considerable interval without approaching the holy Table, as frequent communion with suitable dispositions is unquestionably the most efficacious means of arriving at the summit of Christian perfection.

The holy Fathers understand likewise by this *supersubstantial bread* the word of God,

¹ Trent, Sess. xxii. Cap. 6.

either announced to us from the pulpit, or presented to us in pious books. Let us then listen to this divine word as often as we can, and with sincere dispositions of profiting by it : and let us adopt the pious custom of a daily spiritual reading. From these two practices we shall derive the greatest helps for salvation ; but we shall render ourselves highly culpable before Almighty God, if we use not the supernatural aliments, which he offers us with profusion, and which he obliges us to petition.

AND FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES
AS WE FORGIVE THEM THAT
TRESPASS AGAINST US

THIS is the sense of the fifth petition, which in the gospel is expressed in these words : *Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.*¹ Is there any one of us all, who is not a debtor to divine justice on account of his sins ? No : we are all God's debtors, and, what is worse, insolvent debtors. If he forgave us not our debts, we should in vain attempt to cancel them. His goodness inclines him to grant us the remission of them, if we duly solicit it ; but in the prayer which he has taught us, he has annexed a condition so equitable, that we should be highly unreasonable, if we refused to comply with it.

As we are continually offending God, so

¹ Matt. vi 12.

also it sometimes happens, that our neighbour offends us, and becomes our debtor, as we are the debtors of God. If we pardon our neighbour the wrongs, which he has done us ; if we remit him his debt, and retain no resentment, nor malicious disposition of heart towards him ; God on his side engages to grant us the pardon of our offences, to remit us the debts, which we have contracted with him by sin, and to forget them, so as not to retain the least remembrance of them : but he annexes this indispensable condition, and requires the fulfilling of it so rigorously, as to enjoin us not to implore the remission of our own faults but in proportion as we remit those of our neighbour. *Forgive us, as we forgive* : that is, pardon us not, unless we pardon ; assert thy rights with the utmost rigour, if we be rigorous in exacting ours. But if, indulgent and easy in pardoning our neighbour the wrongs, which he may have done us, we renounce all rancour and desire of revenge, and become sincerely reconciled to him ; do thou, O God, treat us in the same manner, show thyself an indulgent Father towards thy guilty children, and receive us back into thy good graces.

Is not this condition highly equitable ? Is it not even highly advantageous to us ? Whatever distance there may otherwise be between our brethren and us, after all they are our equals by nature : whereas who are we compared with God ? a mere

nothing in respect of the all-sufficient source of infinite perfections! Again, however great may be the offence, which they have committed against us, what is this offence, when weighed against those for which we are amenable to divine justice? The debt of our brother is in the gospel valued by Jesus Christ at a few shillings, and ours at a thousand talents: and even this valuation is made only with a view to striking our imagination: for in fact no comparison can be made between the two debts. Moreover supposing the vengeance which we presume to take upon our neighbour to be just, still does it bear any proportion to the vengeance, which God has a right to exercise upon us? Is our neighbour in any degree as incapable of giving us satisfaction, as we are of satisfying divine justice? In fine how fortunate will it be for us, if God pardons us! How irreparably unfortunate, if he pardons us not! Whoever seriously ponders these truths, must necessarily conclude, that God could not set our reconciliation with him at a lower rate. Besides it will be no small consolation in the hour of death to be able to say: I have pardoned others, O Lord, from my heart; I confidently trust upon thy express word, that thou wilt pardon me.

But the maxims of the world, you may urge, and even my own interest prevent me from pardoning. What! Is then any thing more nearly connected with your

let us be perfect, as our heavenly Father is perfect. It is in speaking of the love of our enemies, that Jesus Christ prescribes to us this rule. Like him, let us pardon without restriction, without reserve : let us fix no limits, beyond which forgiveness is not to be expected at our hands : let our dispositions in regard of our brethren be the same as those of God in our regard : let us moreover remember what experience perhaps has taught us to our cost, that no torment is equal to that, which is experienced by a haughty and vindictive soul ; as no joy is so pure, as that of pardoning ; no peace so sweet as that of a meek and humble heart, unruffled by injuries ; no means in fine so efficacious both for sinners and for saints to find easy access to God, and to petition with confidence, and obtain with certainty the most special graces.

LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION

LIFE is full of snares, full of occasions of sin : no age is free from temptations : no place, no time, no employment, no situation of life can screen us from them : temptations from exterior objects, which pervade the imagination, flatter the senses, and seduce the soul : temptations from the world, in the midst of which we are forced to live, and which by its maxims, example, authority, and tyranny, withdraws us from virtue, and precipitates us into vice : tempta-

tions on the part of the devil, who sleeps not, but roams about like a roaring lion to devour us, who respects neither solitude nor sanctuary, who, even during the most holy exercises, often stirs up the passions, spreads a thick cloud over the mind, throws the soul into trouble, weakens the will, and excites within it such delectations, that it is almost impossible to discern real from apparent consent: temptations still more dangerous from our pride, self-love, concupiscence, and curiosity, vices which are all born with us, and which age serves only to unfold and strengthen; whence so far from finding within ourselves any resource against our external enemies, we ourselves are our most formidable enemies, and we should have little to fear from other enemies, did we not entertain a secret correspondence with them.

Even with a firm will, and after the most steadfast resolutions, what weakness do we not show in the time of trial! We are astonished at this weakness, and can scarcely believe ourselves so frail. If the hand of God support us not, we fail almost at every step.

Temptations, however, notwithstanding the dangers that attend them, are serviceable, nay even necessary for us. *What doth he know*, says the scripture, *who hath not been tried?*¹ He knows not the depth of his misery and corruption: he fondly trusts in

¹ Ecclus. xxxiv 9.

his own strength: he has no true, no solid humility: he knows not God, nor the operations of his grace in the conduct of souls, nor the unbounded confidence, to which he is entitled, nor his fidelity in succouring in time of need those who invoke him, nor the resistless power of his protection. The more devoted we are to him, and the more acceptable in his eyes, the more we must expect to be tried by temptation: to wish to be exempted from it, is to renounce at once whatever is most excellent in the practice of virtue.

Placed then as we are between the necessity of being tempted for our improvement, and the danger of being overcome by temptation, what must we do, what measures must we adopt? We have only to throw ourselves into the arms of our Father, and beg him to preserve us from yielding. Let us incessantly call upon him, and we may confidently trust, that he will hear us, and assist us in due season. If we keep close to him, *evil will not approach* us. If we be careful to preserve a sense of his holy presence at the bottom of our heart, it will repel all the shafts of the wicked one, and hinder them, notwithstanding all his efforts, from penetrating into the centre of the soul, where God resides.

But in order to render ourselves secure that God will not let us yield to temptation, we must on our side never rashly expose ourselves, nor seek the occasions of tempta-

tion ; we must even foresee and shun them as far as depends on us : for the Holy Ghost has declared, that *he who loveth danger, shall perish in it.*¹ And for us to be under the obligation of avoiding such occasions, it is not necessary that they be evidently dangerous ; it suffices that they be such as to give just cause for apprehension and suspicion.

In the second place, if these occasions be unavoidable, or such as we could not foresee, we must not be alarmed. We must immediately have recourse to God, beg him with filial confidence to support us in the delicate circumstances, in which his providence has placed us, and trust assuredly that he will not fail to come to our assistance.

We must, in the third place, maintain within our hearts an habitual horror of all deliberate sin, whether grievous or venial ; so that, upon the least danger of sin, this salutary horror of it may be the first impression made on our souls. We must, moreover, habituate ourselves to prayer, that in these critical conjunctures we may have recourse to God so spontaneously and rapidly, as almost to prevent deliberation. In general, distrust of ourselves, confidence in God, watchfulness, recollection, a habit of prayer, and faithful correspondence with grace, even in the smallest things, will undoubtedly shield us from many temptations,

¹ Ecclus. iii 27.

and will support us in those, which God shall permit for our spiritual good.

It may be added, that, if the temptation be obstinate and return frequently, we must discover it to our spiritual director, take his advice, follow exactly what he prescribes, and abide by his decision with regard to all fears, doubts, and even pretended convictions of our having consented to it. Without this docility and submission we shall never have peace of mind, the devil will take advantage of our silence, or of our want of obedience, and will precipitate us into vice or into despair.

BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL.

AMEN

By *evil* we must here mean what Jesus Christ means, and would have his disciples mean. Now in his divine ideas, which ought to be the rule of ours, there are but two real evils, *sin*, and the punishment of sin, *hell*. These are the two evils, which the Christian must fear, and the deliverance from which he must earnestly solicit for himself and for others. As long as we live, we shall have reason to apprehend our falling into *sin*, and in consequence into *hell*. Our certain deliverance and security can only have place at death, and then only, if then we be in the state of grace. To preserve sanctifying grace, and to recover it when lost depend upon us with the help of divine

grace, which is always ready at hand : but it depends upon God alone to fix us in that happy state for ever by death, which he sends when he pleases. This is what is called *final perseverance* : and it is the most precious of all God's gifts, because it insures all the rest by insuring our eternal happiness. It is a pure gift, which, according to St Austin, we cannot merit but by humble supplication, and which we ought always to petition absolutely and unconditionally, as it is not lawful for us to be indifferent about it under any motive of pretended disinterestedness. No Christian is authorized to say to God : " Deliver us from the evil of sin, and from eternal death, *if* it be thy holy will " : but, " Deliver us from both the one and the other, *because* it is thy holy will."

However as that, which deserves hell, which the torments of hell can only punish sufficiently by being eternal, and which directly attacks the infinite majesty and sanctity of God, is in itself an evil much more to be dreaded and shunned than hell : it follows that sin is an evil, which every Christian ought to fear, detest, and shun more than any other evil whatever, even hell-fire itself, if it did not imply sin, and could be separated from it. The reason of this is, that sin is the evil of God, and that there is no temporal evil, which created man ought not to choose, and to which he ought not to expose himself, rather than offend

God. Whosoever conceives not this, has not a just notion of the malice of sin.

We beg that God would deliver us from it by death, and preserve us from it during life ; because our weakness and corruption are so great, that without his special protection it is impossible for us to guard against it ; because the circumstances and occasions, which expose us to it, depend so immediately upon Providence, that it alone can remove, or avert them ; because in fine God has the power of changing the perverse dispositions of our heart, that incline us to sin, and is ever ready to hear the petitions, and to second the efforts, which we make for that end.

But this petition is not sincere on our part, if by meditation and reading we impress not on our mind and heart the great truths calculated to inspire them with the most lively horror of sin ; if, knowing our frailty by long experience, we avoid not carefully all occasions of sin ; but on the contrary often seek them, and wantonly and deliberately throw ourselves into them ; if we presumptuously rely upon our own strength, or upon God's special help, which is never due to us, when we wilfully expose ourselves to danger ; if we live in a continual dissipation and forgetfulness of God, which leave our senses and imagination open to exterior objects ; if moreover we use not the means, which God affords us to preserve us from sin, such as watchfulness,

prayer, fasting, frequenting of the sacraments, and the like ; if, in a word, for a more secure preservative from grievous sins we determine not to shun even the smallest wilful and deliberate fault, and to show an extreme fidelity in corresponding with the smallest graces. In order to this it is of the highest importance for us to be thoroughly convinced that, after mortal sin, the greatest of all evils in itself, and still more in its consequences, is deliberate venial sin : that resistance to grace is never faultless : that it contristates the Holy Ghost, and by degrees conducts the soul to perdition.

Hence that our confidence may be well grounded, when we ask God to deliver us from evil, and to help us in time of need, we must begin by delivering ourselves from evil by the means of actual grace, the right use of which will entitle us to greater graces : we must adopt all the precautions, which Christian prudence may suggest, and watch well the dispositions of our heart ; we must stifle our passions in their birth, refuse them all nourishment, and not suffer them to grow so strong, as to be beyond control. If we be not wanting to ourselves, God will never be wanting to us. But to hope that he will *deliver us from evil*, while we, on our side, do nothing for our own deliverance, is a gross illusion. God requires exertions from us, and enables us to make those exertions : he has promised to second us, and, if we be courageous and faithful, he

will crown our courage and fidelity with final perseverance.

As to temporal evils, whether public, as wars, famine, plagues, and other similar calamities ; or private, which attack our goods, health, repose, and even our life, they are not properly evils in the estimation of a Christian ; but rather trials, which in his respect, become benefits, or evils, according to the light in which he considers them, and the use which he makes of them. Sickness, infirmity, and death are a just punishment of the disobedience of our first parents. Considering them as such with regard to divine justice, let us submit to them, accept them without murmur, or complaint, and draw from them all the advantages and helps for salvation, which God requires that we should draw.

There are other evils, which befall us through the malice of men. These God wills not, but permits : he well knows how to make them subservient to his glory, and, if we oppose him not, to our sanctification. Let us consider them in this light, and bear them, because such is his will and pleasure. Let us pardon from our hearts the authors of them, and *pray*, as our Lord commands us, *for them that persecute and calumniate us.*¹ Let us never forget that the greatest of blessings, the redemption of mankind, was effected by such evils, which Jesus Christ suffered for us ; that the most

¹ Matt. v 44.

heinous of crimes gave rise to the most eminent of sacrifices ; and that by uniting our cross with the cross of Jesus Christ, we insure to ourselves eternal happiness. Thus will these evils, as they are generally considered to be, become in our regard the source of the greatest blessings.

There are again other evils, for which we must blame ourselves alone, which originate from our passions and excesses of all kinds, which impair our health, derange our fortune, involve us in troubles, and ruin our reputation. These are a resource, which God in his mercy has reserved for us, in order to draw us out of our disorders, to enable us to expiate them, and to lead us back into the paths of salvation. These happy effects they will not fail to produce, if, after having detested and corrected our past misconduct, which occasioned them, we accept them in the spirit of humility and penance, and bless God for having afflicted and humbled us.

It is the spirit of the Church to entreat God to ward off public calamities, to the end that her children being less intent upon their miseries, may serve him with more piety, tranquillity and spiritual joy. It is the duty of the faithful to unite their intentions with those of the Church, and yet to bear these calamities with patience, as long as they last. God also allows us to petition deliverance from our own temporal evils, and from those of persons, whose

welfare is dear to us: but this petition must be humble, calm, submissive, and subservient to his blessed will, as well as to our own spiritual good, and that of our neighbour. Upon such occasions the faithful are inclined to pray with earnestness, and need no incitement: but it rarely happens that their petitions proceed from pure and Christian motives. Nature has usually a greater share in their prayers, than grace: and few petition their deliverance from spiritual evils, and their advancement in virtue with as great ardour, and desire of being heard.

Even this present life, considered in a certain light, is an evil, by reason of the temptations, with which it is beset, and the continual danger of offending God, and of losing our souls, to which we are exposed. It is an evil, inasmuch as it is an exile, which keeps us at a distance from our heavenly country, and from the sight and possession of God. Viewing it in this light, it is praiseworthy to beg of God to abridge and to terminate it; but we must ask for this with due submission to remain here as long as he shall think proper. In good Christians, this desire of death is a consequence of their desire to secure their salvation, and in holy souls it is an effect of divine love, which makes them sigh after the happy moment, that is to unite them for ever to the object of their love. God grant that this desire may be our own,

PRACTICAL CONCLUSION

THE above short exposition suffices amply to convince us, that the Lord's prayer expresses or implies the chief points of Christian morality, and of our duties towards God, our neighbour, and ourselves. By meditating upon it maturely, each one, according to his state and condition, will discover in it an inexhaustible source of lights and of affections : but it will avail us little to read, to reflect, to meditate, unless we act according to our reflections, and reduce them into practice.

It is not, indeed, possible to have distinctly present to our minds, the full detail of all the truths contained in this prayer every time we recite it : nor does God require it : but he requires, that every Christian, in proportion to his capacity, should be well instructed in the meaning of this divine prayer ; and that he should nourish in his heart the sentiments, which it is calculated to produce, and make them the rule of his conduct.

For this end it were advisable to read the foregoing, or some similar exposition, slowly, leisurely, attentively, and at different times, allowing grace to act upon the soul ; and to dwell calmly on the pious thoughts and affections, which it would gradually inspire. It were still better to make the

various articles, which compose this prayer, separate subjects of daily meditation, each one adapting them to his actual situation and disposition, and to continue this exercise as long as the soul should find entertainment in it. Those, who find it difficult to meditate, will derive great advantage from placing themselves in the presence of God, and entreating him to instruct them himself, and to make them understand, relish, and practise each petition. This exercise, which consists only in listening to God with silent humility, simplicity, and docility, will be as instructive and beneficial, as any books or reflections can be; which additional helps however we must never neglect, when in our power.

We must next seriously examine, whether we have lived hitherto, and are resolved to live henceforth, according to the spirit of this divine prayer. For instance, whether we look upon God as a Father, and entertain for him the sentiments, which he has a right to expect from his children: whether we love other Christians as our brethren in Jesus Christ, and wish them and are disposed to do them all the good, both spiritual and temporal, which we are able to do, and which we wish to be done to ourselves: in what we sanctify the name of God, and in what we are deficient in this point, either in deeds or in intentions: what we could do more for ourselves, or for others: and so on. Such an examination as this, made in detail with attention, would be extremely advan-

tageous, and lead to a thorough reformation of principles, sentiments, and conduct. Nothing more would be requisite than to form resolutions with regard to each particular, to adhere to them faithfully, and to call ourselves to a strict account for their observance.

By thus referring the whole plan of our lives to the Lord's prayer, we should always have before our eyes one simple object, which, without fatiguing the mind, would direct all the energy of the will to this one point ; and would enable us easily to judge, whether in our spiritual career we advanced, or lost ground. In frequenting the sacraments, this prayer would furnish a proper subject for the examination of conscience, and suggest the motives best adapted to excite contrition. It would supply an excellent method for hearing mass devoutly, and for communicating holily. It would afford ample matter for meditation and prayer, and produce an infinity of good thoughts and holy aspirations during the day. Every motive then invites us to adopt so simple a practice, which is founded upon the authority of Jesus Christ, and which, if duly followed, will undoubtedly raise us to a very high degree of perfection. How many pious souls, especially in the more humble stations of life, have, without any other prayer than the Lord's prayer, and without any other master than the Holy Ghost, arrived at eminent sanctity !

Even though no other advantage were attached to this practice, than that of reciting this divine prayer with a recollected mind, and inflamed heart, this alone would be a very great advantage, and would draw upon us the blessing of our heavenly Father : but besides this, St Austin positively asserts, the Lord's prayer properly recited, cancels our daily faults and imperfections : and surely this is more than a sufficient reason for learning to say it properly.

Let us conclude this short tract by once more recommending a most excellent practice, which has already been mentioned more than once. It is to give ourselves up to Jesus Christ with our whole heart, that he may instruct us himself in the various truths, which he meant to comprise in his prayer ; that he may inspire us with a relish for them, and grant us the graces, which are necessary to act conformably to them, to the full extent of his desire. We shall infallibly be heard, if we ask this favour with fervour, and with a sincere wish to obtain it.

A. M. D. G.



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AUTHOR

Christian Sanctified by the L

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